

Clean Water and Growth:

Can You Have Both?

A study is underway to preserve and protect the “special protection waters” of the middle Delaware without impeding growth desired by local municipalities.

The study focuses on a 300 square-mile drainage area in the vicinity of Port Jervis, N.Y., which surrounds 8.5 miles of the river from just north of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area upstream to the southern edge of the Upper Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River. This river reach borders

Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York.

Development patterns in this area are critical to the future of the river. It is an area of high potential growth due to highway corridors, the proposed development of casinos by several Native American tribes, and a rail line.

The goal of the three-year study is to develop a watershed management plan that defines how states and local municipalities within the tri-state middle Delaware River region can accommodate anticipated growth while maintaining the existing good water quality of this river segment.

The plan initially would cover the management of point-source (end-of-pipe) discharges, then address non-point sources of pollutants like stormwater runoff.

The commission and the National Park Service are the lead agencies on the project. Partners include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Departments of Environmental Protection in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, county and local governments, developers, and watershed associations.

Additional information on the study can be found on the DRBC web site: <http://www.nj.gov/drbc/tristate.htm>.



Keeping Tabs on the Resource

The commission amended its Comprehensive Plan and Water Code during the year to improve its system for collecting water-use data — information vital to managing the basin’s waters.

Under the regulations, public water suppliers and other users with ground or surface water withdrawals exceeding 100,000 gallons a day must report that usage to their respective states, which will then transmit the data to the commission.

The regulations require that the data be characterized, breaking out such uses as residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, bulk sales, hydroelectric, and agricultural irrigation. They also require the reporting of evaporative losses, the status of water metering, information on whether the water is recycled, and the method used to dispose of wastewater.

Enhanced up-to-date data are needed to develop consumptive water-use estimates, project water use trends, and evaluate the effectiveness of water conservation programs.

The water usage reporting requirement can be viewed on-line at: <http://www.nj.gov/drbc/Res2001-8.htm>.

The entire Comprehensive Plan and Water Code can be downloaded at: <http://www.nj.gov/drbc/regula.htm>.